

3331 O STREET, NORTHWEST (HOUSE)
Georgetown
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS DC-836
DC, GEO, 241-

PHOTOGRAPHS

PAPER COPIES OF COLOR TRANSPARENCIES

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

3331 O STREET, NW (HOUSE)

HABS NO. DC-836

Location: 3331 O Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.

Present Owner: Diana and Brice Clagett

Present Use: Private residence

Significance: This house is a good example of post-Civil War Second Empire-style domestic architecture, as seen in the intact Mansard roof. The house's architectural significance is further enhanced by the twentieth-century alterations, such as the Georgian Revival door surround and the Art Deco interior, which reflect some of this century's popular tastes. Two prominent people, James Roosevelt and Robert F. Kennedy, rented the house, adding to its historical significance. The rear garden is an attractive and carefully cultivated example of the private gardens Georgetown is well known for.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: In 1869 Eliza Mosher sold the lot to Mr. and Mrs. William T. Herron. Herron had been a contractor and built his own house in Georgetown where he resided until 1868. He and his family moved to another Georgetown residence and at least one anonymous author contends he lived at the second house, 1404 35th Street, for a little over a year while he built 3331 O Street. The 1869 City Directory lists his new profession, grocer, but more importantly lists him at 3331 O Street. It is not disputed that Herron built the house and that construction started in 1869, but it is unclear whether it was occupied in the same year or the next.

2. Original and subsequent owners:

1810	(Deed X-399) John M. Beatty To Charles A. Beatty
1811	Deed (AA-185) Charles A. Beatty and wife, Eunice To

Eliza Lidia Magruder

- 1869 Deed in Trust (D9-186)
Elizabeth Mosher (sic, married name of Eliza Magruder), Henrietta Herron, wife of Wm. T. Herron
To
Richard R. Crawford, trustee. Herron had purchased the property from Mosher for the use of Henrietta Herron, but the deed from Mosher conveying the parcel to Herrons has not been identified.
- 1887 Deed (1276-121)
Richard R. Crawford
To
Henrietta Herron
- 1890 Deed (1517-421)
Henrietta Herron and Wm. T. Herron
To
Jesse C. Ergood
- 1891 Deed (1620-303)
Jesse C. Ergood and wife Sarah A.
To
James T. Petty
- 1930 Deed (6427-19)
Howard P. Okie and wife Rachel Hardy, Eda Biggers Baxter
To
Lucy Kennon
- 1930 Deed (6427-23)
Lucy Kennon
To
C.P. Mayo, Inc.
- 1930 Deed (6448-352)
C.P. Mayo, Inc.
To
Eleanor M. Lehr
- 1931 Deed (6556-463)
Eleanor M. Lehr
To

Marjory Velie Heard

- | | |
|------|--|
| 1943 | Deed of Trust (7918-173)
Marjory Velie Heard, married woman
To
Wm. A. Heard, her husband |
| 1945 | Deed (11088-225)
Wm. A. Heard, widower
To
Moline National Bank |
| 1960 | Deed number not indicated
Moline National Bank
To
June P. Cowham |
| 1984 | Deed number not known
Mrs. Calvert Carey (former June Cowham)
To
Diana S. Knop (Mrs. Brice Clagett) |

Chain of Title copied from one in the Peabody Room and augmented by newspaper clippings at the Peabody Room. Mrs. Clagett confirmed the purchase of the house in 1984. How and when the property conveyed from Petty to Okie, et al. is not indicated in the Chain of Title at the Peabody Room, but city directories list Petty at the house through 1929. It is presumed that Petty conveyed the house to Okie in 1930, and in 1930 and 1931 the house was sold several times. The next two owners, Heard and the bank held the parcel for relatively long periods, but it appears that it was a rental period until Mrs. Calvert Carey purchased it in 1960.

3. Builder, contractor, suppliers: It is commonly accepted that Herron built the house for his own use.

4. Original plans and construction: No information available.

5. Alterations and additions: In the 1930s, the owners filed several permits for alterations and additions, including repairing the side and rear porches. But the most significant change documented by a permit application was for the addition of a kitchen wing at the northeast corner of the building and a terrace at the northwest corner of the building. It is assumed that the terrace is the room currently described as a sun room. Also, built at this time was the structure at the northwest corner of the lot, the playhouse. The interior alterations, such as the presumed removal of walls dividing front and back parlor, change in molding, paneling of the library, and Art Deco powder room are undocumented, but assumed to date to the 1930s.

Also undocumented is the addition of the Georgian revival front door surround, which is assumed to date also to the early to mid-1930s as it appears in a 1937 newspaper photograph. It seems likely that the door surround and front walls, with their Georgian revival pineapple details, date to the same renovation. One temporary alteration dating to the 1930s was tenant James Roosevelt's addition of a ramp in the driveway. In the basement, a Parisian street scene and bistro have been created, presumably for Mrs. Calvert Carey, journalist and Georgetown socialite.

The Baist Real Estate maps from 1894 (the earliest) to 1925 show the house to be a nearly square main block with a rectangular rear wing, projecting north, but slightly to left of center on the rear facade. Along the left or west facade of the rear addition, there appears to be a porch. Only in the 1937 Baist do the kitchen wing (to the east) and the sun room appear.

B. Historical Context:

This parcel was once part of the extensive Georgetown holdings of Eliza Magruder, the only child of Dr. Ninian Magruder, who like another of Eliza's ancestors, James Beatty, was a significant property owner and real estate speculator in eighteenth and nineteenth century Georgetown. That Eliza Magruder, who married James Mosher, lived elsewhere in Georgetown and held this property from 1823 until 1869 without developing it, suggest that the desire to speculate in Georgetown real estate lived on well into the nineteenth century, but the opportunities available in the eighteenth and even early nineteenth centuries no longer existed by the time she inherited the parcel upon her father's death in 1823. Like other Georgetown houses, including some of the most prominent in Georgetown Heights, this house was owned in the late nineteenth century by a man engaged in retail in Georgetown, rather than the merchant/ real estate speculator so common in Georgetown's early days. In the mid-twentieth century this house became a rental property, again an experience shared by other, larger Georgetown houses.

In fact, the property's historical significance is derived from the renters. In 1937, James Roosevelt, the son of the president and his secretary rented the house for three years. In that same year, he applied for a permit to erect a ramp to the house from the driveway. No doubt he was anticipating his father visiting the house. Since the press was not allowed to photograph the president in his wheelchair it is unlikely that any photographs showing the president using the ramp exist. Another member of a very prominent democratic family, Robert F. Kennedy, rented the house in 1957 when he was a lawyer on a senate committee. This house was only a few blocks from his brother John's house.

In 1960, Mrs. Calvert Carey bought the house. According to newspaper articles she was a board member of the International Student House and a patron of the arts. According to the current owner, Mrs. Carey was also a journalist. In 1975, Mrs. Carey, a widow, married a federal government bureaucrat who was the son of a Polish princess. He had been renting her basement apartment. These details suggest the further changing nature of Georgetown in the 1960s and 1970s in that at least some women might still be socially prominent, but they could

also pursue careers and even have renters, with proper pedigree.

Mrs. Carey's elaborate garden, described in detail below, was decorated with Jacques Lipchitz's "Guitar Player and an Egyptian granite head, fifteenth dynasty, according to an undated description at the Washingtonia Room of the main branch of the D.C. Public Library.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: Thirty-three, thirty-one O Street is unlike the majority of eighteenth and nineteenth century Georgetown houses. It is free-standing in a section of Georgetown where most houses abut their neighbors, it has a strong vertical emphasis where most of the houses have a horizontal emphasis, and it suggests an eighteenth century as well as nineteenth century date of erection while most Georgetown houses evoke but one narrow stylistic period. In its nearly square massing, tall first floor, and mansard roof, the house is clearly of the period of the Civil War or just after it. And the stylistic evidence is confirmed by the deed and directory records, placing construction in 1869. But equally as compelling is the substantial Georgian revival door surround, which for many viewers might suggest an eighteenth-century date of erection or to the more knowledgeable, a twentieth-century renovation. The house's character is that of a largely intact Second Empire Building with a Georgian revival door surround that is of such quality that it holds its own against the earlier and usually not compatible architectural details and massing. It is apparent that the interior has undergone much more substantial renovations and changes in style. The interior, unlike the exterior, suggests an evolution of styles and tastes from the late nineteenth through the middle of the twentieth century.

2. Condition of fabric: The house and gardens are in excellent condition. On the interior and the exterior, the owner has made minimal changes.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The main block of the house is two stories, with a basement and a high attic. Centered on the north elevation is a two story rear wing that appears on the 1894 Baist insurance map. It is flanked by one story wings dating to the 1930s. The main block is a nearly square three bay structure with the entrance in the center bay of the south elevation. A steep driveway runs along the west facade.

2. Foundations: Neither from the exterior nor the interior is it possible to view the foundation. It is assumed that the foundation is brick.

3. Walls: The south or main elevation consists entirely of stretchers with a tight mortar

joint. The east and west elevations have a brick with a less hard surface and a much more pronounced joint, especially along the south section of the east facade. A convex water table runs along the south facade.

4. Structural system, framing: It is assumed that the house is of load-bearing masonry construction, with heavy timber framing.

5. Porches, stoops: Seven stone steps, flanked by iron railings, lead up to the front door stoop. The rear and side porches were removed sometime after the early 1930s.

6. Chimneys: The east and west elevations each have two tall, rectangular chimneys with blind arcades.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The main door and surround, which is the most prominent feature on the exterior, is centered on the first story. The other doors and doorways are to the kitchen, sunroom, and library and are new doors (1930s and later and are sliding doors on the sunroom) and of no architectural or decorative importance. As stated earlier, the front door and surround appear in a 1937 newspaper photograph and are stylistically consistent with the Colonial Williamsburg-inspired Georgian Revival popular in the 1930s. The door surround is evocative of at least two well-known eighteenth-century mansions, Westover in Virginia and the Wentworth-Gardner House in New Hampshire. Not the only, but most noticeable difference is that in the Georgetown house, the pediment cornices are convex curves rather than s-curves. The broken pediment with a pineapple, the traditional New England symbol of welcome, in the crown, has consoles, with a row of dentils below the consoles. The frieze below the pediment is plain, while the architrave consists of four built-up fascia with the top band having an ovolo profile. The entablature is supported by two fluted, half-round, engaged columns, with bases, capped with exquisite Roman Corinthian capitals. Within this door surround, there is in essence another door surround of jambs and header decorated with a continuous row of alternatively glyphs (five) and punched circles in the frieze. In contrast to the high style outer surround, this one suggests a more primitive or rural inspiration. This detail is repeated between the paneled double doors and the leaded glass transom. The doors and transom are set back from the door surround, providing for a deep, paneled reveal.

b. Windows: The first floor of the front elevation has sixteen-over-sixteen windows to either side of the door. The three much smaller second floor windows are twelve-over-twelve. All the windows have projecting arched lintels and sills. Each window has paneled shutters, painted black. The east and west facades of the main block are largely devoid of windows, with the second stories lacking any windows. On the first floor of the west facade, the two windows are centered on that wall, while on the east facade, aside from a small window for the front powder room there is one window centered on the facade and a second window at the extreme north end of the east facade.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The Mansard roof has the characteristic steep lower part, with the shallow, hipped upper part. The lower part of the roof is slate, in a diagonal pattern, but is monochromatic. The roofs of the rear wings are flat, but that of the sunroom has a steep lower part done in slate, echoing the Mansard of the main block.

b. Cornice, eaves: A deep cornice is supported by brackets.

c. Dormers: Each elevation has dormer windows with arched lintels with keystones. At the outside edge of the jamb, there is a vertical console. The front facade has three dormers of nine over six, with arched tracery at the top. These dormers line up over the first and second story windows. The east elevation has coupled dormers between the chimneys. By contrast, the west facade has one dormer between the chimneys and the second dormer in front of the more southern of the two chimneys. The rear elevation has four dormers, with three close to the northwest corner of the roof and the last dormer close to the northeast corner of the roof.

C. Description of the Interior:

1. Floor plans:

a. Basement: The west side of the basement is decorated with murals and furnishings of a Parisian street scene leading to a bistro with bar and seating. The other side of the basement, which was not seen, is the furnace room.

b. First floor: The front doors open onto a small vestibule, separated from the front stair hall by glass doors. Immediately to the right of the stair hall is a powder room with a closet and water closet angled at the two front corners. The powder room is separated from the dining room by a wall. The dining room has two openings onto the stair hall, one close to the entrance to the powder room and in front of the stairs, which climb the east wall of the hall, and a second opening beyond the stairs. The west side of the first floor is one large living room, also with two openings to the stair hall. The rear opening corresponds to the rear opening of the dining room, while the front opening is slightly north of the opening to the powder room. On the north (rear) wall of the stair hall an opening, slightly right of center, opens onto a cross corridor. Along the north wall of this passage, is a door on axis with the opening on the south wall and this door opens to the library. In the cross corridor, between the library and stair hall, on the left is a servants stairs and opening to the sunroom. On the right is a storage room which opens onto the pantry, and the pantry opens onto the kitchen.

None of the upper floors were inspected.

2. Stairway: An open-string stair runs along the east wall of the stair hall to a short landing, then climbs and runs along the west wall. Each tread has two turned balusters. Each

spindle has a cylinder at the bottom which pinches to a vase above, which pinches to a taller section which is wider at the bottom, and finally it pinches and then widens to a torus and narrows gradually to the rail. The baluster is painted white, while the rail and volute appear to be unpainted hard wood, perhaps mahogany. The string is undecorated, with a horizontal block below the tread intersecting a vertical block at the edge of the riser.

3. Flooring: In the dining room, living room, and library, the dark, wide boards that appear to be original, run from south to north. The stair hall is carpeted and most likely has the same wooden floors as the rooms already mentioned. The sunroom has a stone floor, while the other rooms not discussed have floor coverings.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls and ceilings are plaster, but there is no ornamentation on the ceilings. The dining room, living room, and stair hall, do however have wall and cornice decoration. In the stair hall and dining room the walls are divided into vertical panels above a dado or chair railing. The living room walls are undivided above the railing. A high base board with a cyma reversa profile is in each room. The stair hall and dining room have the same crown moulding of a fascia of interlocking blossoms, a blank soffit above, and then a fascia of acanthus leaves. In the living room the crown moulding is a soffit of alternating glyphs and rectangles with incised decorative diamonds and triangles filled with leaves. The fascia above the soffit has a continuous bead and above it interlocking acanthus leaves.

The library has paneled wooden walls.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Just as the dining room and stair hall have the same crown moulding, these two rooms have the same wide door surround, with the flat face relieved by two substantial half rounds and an edge. The proportions of this profile suggest it is original to the house's construction. In the living room, the surround is a concave surface decorated with a raised diagonal grid with circles at the intersections of the lines. The surfaces within the lines are rough textured and perhaps were once fluted.

The doors separating the stair hall and dining room and living room have been removed. The only remaining doors are those at the vestibule, to the powder room, to the basement (at rear of stairs) and doors into the rear rooms.

b. Windows: The dining room window treatments are consistent with the door surrounds. In the living room, the windows as well as the door openings are enframed within tall round arched paneling.

6. Decorative features and trim: The most notable features are the least old. The basement Parisian scene is notable and lovely, if not historic. Older, but still twentieth century is the powder room, which is a strong Art Deco statement, with the black floor, baseboards, and

fluted columns, with gold capitals. The Art Deco motif is continued in the arrow and circle motif ornament on the wall and in the band below the ceiling, and in the wall sconces (and furnishings added by the present owner). This room, along with the vestibule, have been decorated with more recently done murals, some whimsical, some architectonic, and painting of the inside of the front door panels to simulate granite. The fireplace in the powder room is a small simulated marble one, but there is no chimney back. The two fireplaces in the living room do have chimney backs, but the fireplaces are also wood painted to simulate granite. In the dining room, there is a chimney back and the marble panels surround it. In turn they are surrounded by wooden mantel surround decorated with Federal period themes in the frieze, elongated sunbursts at the ends and between six glyphs, and the center panel is an urn flanked by vines. The inside edge of the mantel surround is decorated with egg and tongue beading. Elongated vertical consoles, with the wider curve at the top, support the mantelshelf. In the library, the granite fireplace is surrounded by an elegantly simple treatment of four concave wooden molding and then an overmantel panel of the same outside dimensions as the outer row of molding around the fireplace.

7. Hardware: Nothing notable.

8. Mechanical systems: There are hot water radiators, which heat the house, below the windows.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Sited mid-block on the north side of the street between 33rd and 34th streets, 3331 O Street is essentially a free-standing house because it has a driveway on the west and a wide passage to the east. Wooden fences with simplified pineapple finials, echoing the front door surround, to either side of the main block reinforce the sense that this is a free-standing house in a section of where the houses are in continuous rows or at least abutting one neighbor for a the depth of one side wall.

2. Historic landscape design: Unknown, but the previous owner, Mrs. Calvert Carey commissioned Lester Collins, a Virginia landscape architect to design the back garden. Mrs. Carey bought the property in 1960 and it is assumed that the landscaping was done within a few years of purchase. According to an undated, uncredited description found in the Washingtonian Room of the Martin Luther King Branch of the D.C. Public Library: "This garden is on two levels, divided by a sitting-height brick wall with planting areas on the upper sides, and a grass panel forming the lower level. The only planting on the lower level is a Franklinia tree, a comparatively rare tree which is still feeling the shock of transplanting. There are three 'table-top' pines on the lower level and one of three trees of greatest interest, is a Japanese black pine, which, like its companions on the upper level, look like large bonzai trees. There are corkscrew willows in the planting areas on the upper level, with dwarf gumpo azaleas planted beneath one, bulbs and ferns beneath the other, and Stokely low-growing hollies in several places. Tree peonies and lilies also have been put in, and clematis and white hydrangea vines adorn the high

brick wall that surrounds the garden. The terrace furniture is teakwood, made in England from the decks of old ships, and improves in color with exposure. The bronze sculpture is 'Guitar Player' by Jacques Lipchitz. The granite head is from Egypt, fifteenth dynasty. The architect for this garden is Lester Collins." The current owner, Mrs. Diane Clagett, who has restored several houses and is also quite knowledgeable about landscaping has made minimal changes to the plantings in the garden. She said that the art in the garden was given by Mrs. Carey, whom she knew, to various local museums, and Mrs. Clagett has installed sculpture by two bronze pieces by Hilde van Roijen, two stone sculptures by Barbara Herzberg, both well-known Georgetown artists and a large polished steel piece, called Interplay, by John Safer.

3. Outbuildings: A brick one story playhouse at the northwest corner of the garden was erected in the 1930s.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Much of the information was from the Peabody Room of the Georgetown Branch of the D.C. Public Library. That material was supplemented by building permits at the National Archives, the files at the Washingtonian Room of the Martin Luther King Library, and in conversations with Mrs. Diane Clagett.

Prepared by: Bill Lebovich, architectural historian, January 2000

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Georgetown Documentation Project was sponsored by the Commission of Fine Arts and undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) of the National Park Service. Principals involved were Charles H. Atherton, Secretary, U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, and E. Blaine Cliver, Chief, HABS/HAER. The documentation was undertaken in two phases. The summer 1998 team was supervised by John P. White, FAIA, Professor of Architecture, Texas Tech University; and architecture technicians Robert C. Anderson, Boston Architectural Center; Aimee Charboneau, Tulane University; Irwin J. Gueco, The Catholic University of America; and Adam Maksay, United States/International Council on Monuments and Sites (US/ICOMOS) architect from the Transylvania Trust. Historic research was initiated by Bryan C. Green, historian, Richmond, Virginia, during this summer. The summer 1999 team was supervised by Roger S. Miller, architect, Alexandria, Virginia, and architecture technicians David Benton, The Catholic University of America; Edward Byrde, The Catholic University of America; Irwin J. Gueco, The Catholic University of America; and Clara Albert, US/ICOMOS architect from the Transylvania Trust. The project historian, and author of the written reports, was William Lebovich, architectural historian, Chevy Chase, Maryland. The photography was undertaken by Jack E. Boucher, HABS staff photographer, and James Rosenthal, photographic assistant.